

QUINEBAUG AND SHETUCKET RIVERS VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

NORTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

The Last Green Valley

Designated in 1994, Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor is a twenty-five town area measuring 540 square miles in northeastern Connecticut. Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., a nonprofit organization designated by the governor of Connecticut to manage projects and to receive the corridor's federal funding, manages the corridor. The organization's vision for the corridor is *"to preserve its natural, historic, and cultural assets while its residents enjoy a quality of life based on a strong, healthy economy compatible with its character."*

Getting Started

In 1988, a grassroots citizens committee from the Quinebaug River Association, working in cooperation with Congressman Sam Gejedenson, sponsored regional workshops to explore public interest in and support for heritage preservation and national designation. The workshops were complemented by a series of National Park Service technical assistance demonstration projects designed to raise awareness of the region's natural, cultural, and historic resources. The demonstration projects included: a "Walking Weekend," guided walks of historic sites and trails; greenways mapping of hiking trails and wildlife corridors; an inventory of historic sites; community design charrettes to develop multiuse trails; and publications—a greenways vision map, a driving tour of historic textile industry sites, and a guide to river access.

In response to the demonstration projects and public workshops, citizens, local governments, regional and state agencies, and businesses expressed a desire to work cooperatively to preserve and enhance the region's heritage resources and accomplish better planning. Five years later, the corridor received its state and federal designation.

Managing the Corridor

Incorporated in 1995, Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., evolved from the original grassroots committee that worked for federal and state designation. Its mission is to assist in the development and implementation of heritage-based programs (for land use, economic development, tourism, agriculture, recreation, historic and cultural resources, and natural resources) as defined in the corridor's *Cultural and Land Management Plan*, required by the federal legislation.

A full-time executive director and a part-time assistant staff Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc.; it also receives technical assistance from the National Park Service and the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension. It has no regulatory authority. The thirteen board members include citizens from throughout the corridor and eight ex officio members from the Connecticut departments of agriculture, environmental protection, economic and community development, and tourism, the historical commission, and the regional chamber of commerce and planning agency.

Funding

Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor's legislation authorized \$200,000 for FY 95 and \$250,000 annually for an additional seven years. Federal funding requires a nonfederal match of at least 1:1. To date, the corridor has received \$600,000 plus \$200,000 in National Park Service technical assistance prior to federal designation. Funds are transferred to the nonprofit via cooperative agreement with National Park Service.

Partnership

The organization's partners include the National Park Service, the Connecticut Humanities Council, the state historical commission, and departments of environmental protection and transportation, the regional planning and tourism agencies, and local economic development commissions. Partnership projects cover a wide range: visitor publications, cost-sharing for publicity, development of multiuse recreation trails, adaptive reuse of mills, landscaping and facade improvements to businesses in historic districts, and commissioning folk songs based on oral histories from the valley.

Measuring Impact

Although the corridor is relatively new, there are already tangible benefits; the most significant have been the adaptive reuse of mills and recreational development. In the public workshops prior to designation it was widely recognized that finding new uses for the valley's 19th-century mills would be pivotal to reviving the region's economy and enhancing its livability. The River Mill project in North Grosvenordale, for example, brought renewed energy and jobs to a depressed mill village. The focus of this comprehensive rehabilitation project extended beyond the mill structure to include the mill housing complex, a new community center/library, and a river greenway connecting the mill to local ballfields and a lakeside recreation area.

Enhancing recreation facilities, such as cycling and walking trails, which connect scenic areas and commercial centers as part of the regional greenway, was also recognized as providing strategic opportunities for merging quality of life and economic benefits. The new trail in Danielson has reconnected the local commercial center to the banks of the Quinebaug River via a pocket park and an attractively landscaped river promenade. Other newly developed trails include the Norwich Heritage Walkway, Putnam River Trail, and reconstruction of the twenty-six-mile, state-owned Air Line Trail, which forms the spine of the region's growing greenway system of protected farmlands and open space. A less tangible, but no less important, heritage corridor benefit is a stronger sense of regional identity. New highway signs, publication of the corridor's National Park Service brochure, and the annual Walking Weekend, which hosted over 4,000 participants in 1997, have all enhanced the region's image.

The appeal of the Heritage Corridor has always been its flexibility and room for real creativity, but it will not be the solution to all the problems of this region. With the Bright Site program and activities such as the Walking Weekend, we have made the first steps in helping to improve the quality of life in our region.

**John Boland, Secretary,
Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc.**

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

MASSACHUSETTS/RHODE ISLAND

America's First Industrialized Waterway

Located along the 46-mile Blackstone River through twenty-four communities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was federally designated in 1986. The corridor is managed by a nineteen-member, bistate, federally appointed commission, which includes the National Park Service, three state agency and four local government representatives, and two others nominated by each governor. The commission's working agenda is: *"to reinvest in the Valley's historic, cultural, and natural resources; tell the industrial history story to a national audience; build local constituencies through heritage partnerships; carry out demonstration projects that encourage those partners; and continue coordination between state and federal agencies which share aspects of its mission."*

Getting Started

In 1983, the National Park Service was asked to assist Massachusetts and Rhode Island in developing a linear heritage park system along the Blackstone River from Worcester, MA, to Providence, RI. The National Park Service provided technical assistance in interpretive planning, historic preservation, and canal restoration, and issued a report outlining strategies for the creation of a regional park. Recognizing both the national significance of the Blackstone Valley's historic resources and the difficulties of creating a traditional park unit to protect them, the National Park Service recommended designation of the entire region as a national heritage corridor. In the two years preceding federal designation in 1986, Massachusetts and Rhode Island continued state-level heritage park initiatives: a \$1 million bond supported preliminary design and land acquisition in Massachusetts; in Rhode Island, voters passed a similar bond to create Blackstone River State Park. At the local level, regional chambers of commerce in both states nurtured public support for national heritage designation.

Managing the Corridor

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission was established by the federal legislation creating the corridor; it provides the framework for planning and implementing the corridor's cultural, historical, and natural resource management programs. Fourteen hired staff, including an executive director, a deputy director, and six National Park Service interpretive rangers, carry out the work of the corridor. The commission is a federal agency with the authority to enter into cooperative agreements with state and local partners and temporarily hold real estate. It has no land use regulatory authority.

Funding

The initial legislation authorized \$350,000 annually for ten years for operation of the commission plus \$3 million for cultural and environmental education programs; it was subsequently amended for an additional ten years at \$650,000 per year for operations plus \$5 million for programs. In practice, the commission currently receives an annual appropriation of approximately \$1 million, split between operations and programs. The federal funds are transferred directly to the commission from the National Park Service and require a 1:1 match from nonfederal funding sources.

Partnership

As the second oldest national heritage corridor, Blackstone River Valley has an impressive record of achieving heritage preservation through partnership: the 1997 *Amendment to the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan* acknowledges over 250 partners, including businesses, museums, academic institutions, conservation groups, and the media. The commission's key partners include the environmental management agencies and historical commissions of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and the twenty-four local governments within the corridor. In 1997, in partnership with the City of Woonsocket, Woonsocket Business Association, Rhode Island Historical Commission, and others, the commission dedicated the Museum of Work and History, one of four corridor visitor centers.

Measuring Impact

Over the last ten years, the commission's activities have made a significant impact on the people of the Blackstone Valley. The distinction of the region's designation as a national heritage corridor, and the presence of a federal commission and uniformed National Park Service rangers, have collectively improved the region's self-image and stimulated regional thinking about resources. The commission's most effective tools in creating this shift in regional attitude have been threefold: public education, which reaches out to the grassroots level; partnerships, which pool local and national resources; and targeted investments, which focus scarce public and private dollars on highly visible projects.

Highlights of the corridor's successes include three visitor centers, with a fourth in the planning stage; a corridor-wide signage and identity program; a wide offering of year-round interpretive programs led by rangers and a growing cadre of volunteers; the Blackstone Valley *Explorer*, an excursion boat which is also a popular venue for interpretive tours; development of the interstate Blackstone Bikeway; and local "visioning" workshops, which have encouraged Blackstone Valley communities to take a more proactive stance to land-use planning and site design issues.

The unique cultural and natural resources of the Blackstone Valley are as important to our national heritage as battlefields or the homes of presidents. Yet, located as they are amid a living community, many of these resources cannot, and should not, be managed or cared for in isolation from the communities of which they are a part. Consequently, Congress came up with the National Heritage Corridor designation as the right way to protect the Valley's significance. Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor provides an unparalleled opportunity for both the Valley and the Nation. This new, more ambitious plan represents a revolutionary departure from the traditional concept of national parks. The Corridor seeks to preserve nationally significant cultural and natural assets where the people of the Blackstone Valley actually live and work.

**Richard Moore, Past Chairman
Blackstone River Valley National
Heritage Corridor Commission**

LOS CAMINOS DEL RIO: A BINATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

TEXAS/MEXICO

A Land Between Two Nations

Los Caminos Del Rio (The Roads Along the River) is a natural and cultural binational heritage corridor that extends 200 miles along the Lower Rio Grande from Laredo to Brownsville, Texas, and from Columbia to Matamoros, Mexico. Managed by Los Caminos Del Rio of Texas, Inc., and Mexico, A.C., a binational nonprofit organization, the corridor draws on the strength of the region's long history of cultural unity to foster historic preservation, economic development, environmental restoration, and binational cooperation. With a strong emphasis on celebrating the region's folklife and folk art, Los Caminos Del Rio is based on the premise that the untold story of the Lower Rio Grande can be used to combat negative images and enhance quality of life.

Getting Started

In 1990-1991, agencies in Mexico and the United States collaborated on an inventory of the region's historic and cultural resources. The resulting binational publication, *A Shared Heritage*, was the first assessment of twenty significant architectural landmarks and the region's arts and crafts that had ever been conducted. It provided the framework for a heritage initiative and challenged the two countries to cooperate in addressing critical resource protection issues facing the region. A groundbreaking achievement, *A Shared Heritage* was the catalyst for the creation of a state task force by Governor Ann Richards; a multiagency federal committee by Mexico's Secretary of Tourism; and major foundation support from the Texas-based Meadows Foundation, which helped to organize Los Caminos Del Rio, Inc. Together these interests were able to gain technical assistance from the National Park Service to coordinate a two-year planning effort for the heritage project.

In 1994, the Los Caminos Del Rio Heritage Project Task Force completed its report, recommending binational federal designation for the region, expanded staffing and responsi-

bilities for Los Caminos Del Rio, Inc., and creation of a federal interagency advisory committee to assist in project implementation. Following publication of the report, political opposition from property rights advocates surfaced in Texas and effectively stopped further progress toward federal designation.

Managing the Corridor

Originally established by the Meadows Foundation as the private sector counterpart to an anticipated federal commission, Los Caminos Del Rio, Inc., has continued its mission of promoting public awareness of the region's heritage and conducting heritage-related projects on both sides of the border. It is currently organizing the second Los Caminos Del Rio Summit; an international forum convened for academic researchers and heritage corridor activists. A full-time executive director, historical architect, and administrative assistant serve as staff for the nonprofit. Its eight board members include representatives from local communities and businesses in Mexico and the United States.

Funding

The Meadows Foundation has been a major supporter contributing over \$2 million during the project's startup and planning phase. With the failure to achieve federal designation, foundation support for Los Caminos Del Rio, Inc., has waned, but local support continues; the nonprofit receives approximately \$150,000 in annual funding from the local communities for staffing and operations and technical support from the Texas Historical Commission.

Partnership

Since the inception of the project, the Meadows Foundation and Texas Historical Commission have been key partners, contributing funds and technical assistance. Other partners include the local communities, Texas state departments of commerce, parks & wildlife, and transportation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Park Service through the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, the Institute for Texan Cultures, and the Conservation Fund.

Measuring Impact

As with other heritage areas, the corridor project has bolstered the region's self-image and community spirit. Even without formal designation, heritage-based efforts have made progress on several fronts. With assistance from the Meadows Foundation and the Texas Historical Commission, a training program specializing in the preservation of historic structures was established for carpenters and others in the building trades. The plaza in the historic district in Roma, Texas, was one of many endangered architectural sites in the corridor that underwent major restoration. The Texas Department of Transportation has begun installation of heritage corridor directional and interpretive signage, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has continued adding lands to its over 100,000-acre wildlife corridor along the Rio Grande.

We feel that the Los Caminos Del Rio Heritage Project has served as a catalyst that has helped the communities to remember their history. The heritage corridor idea has increased their understanding of the importance that the preservation of their past can have in their future.

It has been a great learning experience for us in the public agencies to recognize how urgent it is for the communities and their inhabitants to be able to voice their opinions. They are the ones who are directly involved. It is essential that their ideas, stories and cultural values be heard, for, as they express them, they are also the first to hear their own voices and recognize all that they have to offer to the outside world. Without this cultural awareness, we will simply continue to make each place identical to the next, without the possibility of demonstrating the unique character of each locality.

Margarita Robleda Moguel
Assistant Secretary of Tourism, Mexico

DELAWARE & HUDSON CANAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR**ULSTER COUNTY, NEW YORK****Preserving a 19th Century Technological Triumph**

Constructed in 1824, the 108-mile Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Canal was a major feat of engineering that provided transport for coal, cement, and other goods between Pennsylvania, the Hudson Valley, and New York City. In the early 20th century, the canal was abandoned and came into the public domain in Sullivan and Orange counties, where it was subsequently preserved for recreation. In Ulster County, the challenge of preserving the canal was more difficult since much of the canal's thirty-five miles went to private landowners. The D&H Canal Heritage Corridor Alliance—a coalition of historical societies, museums, conservation groups, and trail advocates—has taken up this challenge. The alliance mission is to promote greater appreciation, protection, and beneficial use of the Corridor's natural, historic, and recreational resources in ways that recognize and respect the rights and interests of private property owners.

Getting Started

In 1988, the New York Parks and Conservation Association assembled a group of local citizens in Ulster County to consider ways of preserving and enhancing the D&H Canal. The National Park Service was asked to assist the group in building a local consensus for conservation projects that did not infringe on the rights of local landowners along the canal. Working with the local citizen committee, the National Park Service helped design and distribute a survey for landowners. Its purpose was to assess their attitudes and to begin to elicit their interest in the project. Concurrently, a series of workshops was also held to encourage the participation of the wider community in preserving the canal. These workshops, together with the results of the landowners survey, were the basis for a *Handbook for Action*, a detailed five-year plan produced by the committee and the National Park Service for a thirty-five-mile heritage corridor highlighting multiuse trails, museums, and historical landmarks.

In developing their plan for the heritage corridor, the committee carefully considered, but decided not to seek, national designation. The committee's focus was limited to the canal's thirty-five miles in Ulster County, and national designation would require consideration of the entire canal length. In addition, since canal ownership in the Ulster County section was almost entirely private, it seemed likely that a private, non-profit effort, patterned after the approach used by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development in the nearby Catskill Forest Preserve, would be less threatening to property rights advocates and, consequently, could be more politically successful in the long run.

Managing the Corridor

In 1992, following release of the *Handbook for Action*, the New York Parks and Conservation Association helped the committee formally incorporate the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor Alliance as a nonprofit organization. Since the alliance has no paid staff, it relies on its volunteer members and on project funding from its partners. The alliance also participates in a new coalition of organizations that represent other segments of the D&H Canal and connecting corridors in New York and Pennsylvania.

Funding

As a private, self-designated heritage corridor initiative, the alliance receives no state or federal funding. In lieu of funding, the alliance has been creatively opportunistic in attracting funding from its partners and others for heritage projects.

Partnership

Of necessity, the alliance has had to work in partnership to accomplish its agenda. Key partners include the New York Parks and Conservation Association and the National Park Service, along with corridor museums, town and county governments, and local businesses.

Measuring Impact

Although still in its infancy, the alliance has many achievements to its credit. The alliance helped Ulster County and three towns secure close to \$300,000 in matching grants from the state to develop two linear parks along seven miles of the canal corridor and bargained successfully with a savings bank and a public utility for another three miles of trail along an adjacent rail right-of-way. It has also worked with the New York Department of Transportation to create three miles of paved linkage and negotiated trail use agreements with landowners and towns. Finally, a recent alliance proposal to replace a sixty-foot bridge has been funded by the Central Hudson Gas and Electric Company.

Overall, the project has brought a more coordinated approach to management of the canal and related sites. However, the private-sector approach does have its shortcomings. The absence of designation and formal boundaries renders the alliance more susceptible to a project agenda that is at times based more on volunteer interests than the original mission. The lack of formal authority has also made the goal of establishing a corridor-wide signage system difficult. Nevertheless, the alliance and its local partners continue to be effective in a region that tends to be wary of government land use regulation.

The National Park Service helped us a lot with mapping and inventory of the old canal and railroad, but what was most exciting was the way they helped get everyone involved in an open dialogue: community leaders, private property owners, environmental enthusiasts, and trail users. That really helped to set our agenda, and the dialogue is still going.

Sheldon Quimby, Past President

D&H Canal Corridor Heritage Corridor Alliance